IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising:

associating, by a first processor, one or more characteristic values with each user of a
plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic
values representing an individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user;

deriving, by a second processor, a community rating uniquely corresponding to a
particular user by aggregating ~~the one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual</u>
<u>feedback rating</u> associated with the particular user and ~~the one or more~~
~~characteristic values~~ <u>one or more individual feedback ratings</u> associated with one
or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community; and

storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage
device.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the online trading community
comprises an electronic community to trade merchandise over a network, wherein the
trading of the merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or
services.

3.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the network comprises the
Internet.

4.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more characteristic
values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the particular user
received from other users of the plurality of users in the electronic community.

5.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the other users of the plurality of
        users comprise users that have previously traded with the particular user.

6.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising maintaining a
        relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree includes
        sponsorship relationships between the particular user and any users of the plurality of
        users that were referred by the particular user.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the sponsorship relationships of
        the plurality of users are represented as the relationship tree including one or more n-ary
        trees.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein information concerning the
        sponsorship relationships between the plurality of users is stored in a data structure for
        each user of the plurality of users.

9.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the data structure for the
        particular user contains a pointer to at least one user of the plurality of users that was
        referred by the particular user.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the deriving of the community
        rating for the particular user is performed utilizing a recursive routine.

11.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the community rating and the
        one or more characteristic values comprise one or more of the following: alphabetic
        values, numeric values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values.

12.-13. (Canceled)

14.   (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data
        representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine
        to:

        associate one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an
                online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an
                individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user; and

        derive a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating ~~the~~
                ~~one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with
                the particular user and ~~the one or more characteristic values~~ <u>one or more</u>
                <u>individual feedback ratings</u> associated with one or more users referred by the
                particular user to the online trading community.

15.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the online
        trading community comprises an electronic community buying and selling of
        merchandise over a network, the merchandise having at least one of goods and services.

16.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the one or
        more characteristic values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the
        particular user received from other users of the plurality of users in the electronic
        community.

17.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 14, wherein the sets of
        instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to maintain
        a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree
        includes sponsorship relationships between the particular user and any user of the
        plurality of users that were referred by the particular user.

18.-20. (Canceled)

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE UNDER 37 C.F.R § 1.111
Serial Number:09/503,960
Filing Date: February 14, 2000
Title: DETERMINING A COMMUNITY RATING FOR A USER USING FEEDBACK RATINGS OF RELATED USERS IN AN
        ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

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21.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the community rating for the
        particular user represent a reputation value corresponding to the particular user.

22.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising:
        associating, by a first processor, a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality
                of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being
                obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback
                received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users;
        associating, by a second processor, a second characteristic value with a second user of the
                plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading
                community by the first user, the second characteristic value being obtained for the
                second user utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received
                concerning the second user from other users of the plurality of users;
        deriving, by a third processor, a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an
                aggregation of the first ~~characteristic~~ feedback value and the second ~~characteristic~~
                feedback value; and
        storing the first community rating for the first user in a storage device.

23.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, further comprising:
        associating a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein
                the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the
                third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback
                value based on feedback received concerning the third user from other users of
                the plurality of users; and
        deriving a second community rating for the second user by utilizing an aggregation of the
                second characteristic value and the third characteristic value.

24.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, further comprising maintaining a
        relationship tree between the first user and the second user of the plurality of users,
        wherein the relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having the second user
        as a lineal descendent of the first user.

25.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, further comprising maintaining a
        relationship tree between the second user and the third user of the plurality of users,
        wherein the relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having the third user as
        a lineal descendant of the second user.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the relationship tree comprises
        a nexus between the first user, the second user, and other users referred by at least one of
        the first user and the second user.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, wherein the first community rating
        comprises first reputation value corresponding to the first user, and the second
        community rating comprises second reputation value corresponding to the second user.

28.   (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data
representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to:

     associate a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an

        online trading community, the first characteristic value is obtained for the first

        user by utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the

        first user from other users of the plurality of users;

     associate a second characteristic value with a second user of the plurality of users,

        wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first

        user, the second characteristic value is obtained for the second user by utilizing a

        second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user

        from other users of the plurality of users; and

     deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an aggregation of the first

        ~~characteristic~~ feedback value and the second ~~characteristic~~ feedback value.

29.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, wherein the sets of

     instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to maintain

     a relationship tree between the first user and the second user of the plurality of users,

     wherein the relationship tree comprises a referral relationship having the second user as a

     lineal descendent of the first user and the second user is referred to the online trading

     community by the first user.

30.   (Canceled)

31.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, wherein the

     relationship tree comprises a nexus between the first user, the second user, and other

     users referred by at least one of the first user and the second user.

32.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, wherein the first

       community rating comprises first reputation value corresponding to the first user, and the

       second community rating comprises second reputation value corresponding to the second

       user.

33.   (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:

       a first storage medium; and

       a first computer coupled with the first storage medium, the first computer to associate one

              or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online

              trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an

              individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user, and to derive a community

              rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating ~~the one or more~~

              ~~characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with the particular

              user and ~~the one or more characteristic values~~ <u>one or more individual feedback</u>

              <u>ratings</u> associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the

              online trading community.

34.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising:

       a second storage medium; and

       a second computer coupled with the second storage medium and the first computer via a

              network interface, the second computer to

       receive feedback concerning the particular user from other users of the plurality of users,

       generate a feedback value corresponding to the particular user based on the feedback, and

              transmit the feedback value to the first computer.

35.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 34, wherein the first computer comprises a

       server computer and the second computer comprises a client computer.

36.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33, wherein the first computer is further to
        maintain a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship
        tree includes sponsorship relationships between the particular user and any users of the
        plurality of users that were referred by the particular user.

37.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33, wherein the first computer is further to
        determine the one or more characteristic values based on the feedback value
        corresponding to the particular user.

38.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 34, wherein the second computer is accessed
        by the plurality of users to trade merchandise, wherein the trading of the merchandise
        comprises buying or selling of goods or services.

39.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 34, wherein the network interface is to
        couple the first computer with the second computer over a network having the Internet.

40.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, wherein the sets of
        instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to:
        associate a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the
                third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third
                characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback
                value based on feedback received concerning the third user from other users of
                the plurality of users; and
        derive a second community rating for the second user by utilizing an aggregation of the
                second characteristic value and the third characteristic value.

41.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 40, wherein the sets of
        instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to maintain
        a relationship tree between the second user and the third user of the plurality of users,
        wherein the relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having the third user as
        a lineal descendent of the second user.

42.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising:
        associating, by a first processor, one or more characteristic values with each user of a
                plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic
                values representing an individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user;
        determining, by a second processor, a community rating uniquely corresponding to a
                particular user by utilizing one or more of the following: (1) ~~one or more~~
                ~~characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with the particular
                user, (2) ~~one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u>
                associated with each user of the plurality of users referred to the online trading
                community by the particular user, (3) ~~one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an</u>
                <u>individual feedback rating</u> associated with each user referred to the online trading
                community by each referred user of the particular user, and (4) a number of users
                referred to the online community by the particular user; and
        storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage
                device.

43.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, further comprising associating the
        community rating to the particular user.

44.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, wherein the online trading community
        comprises an electronic community to trade merchandise over a network, wherein the
        trading of the merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or
        services.

45.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, further comprising maintaining a
       relationship tree between the particular user, each user referred to the online trading
       community by the particular user, and each user referred to the online trading community
       by each referred user of the particular user.

46.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, wherein the determining of the
       community rating for the particular user is performed utilizing a recursive routine.

47.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, wherein the one or more characteristic
       values and the community rating comprise one or more of the following: alphabetic
       values, numeric values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values.

48.   (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:
       a first storage medium; and
       a first computer coupled with the first storage medium, the first computer to associating
              one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an
              online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an
              individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user; and
       determining a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by utilizing
              one or more of the following: (1) ~~one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual</u>
              <u>feedback rating</u> associated with the particular user, (2) ~~one or more characteristic~~
              ~~values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with each user of the plurality of
              users referred to the online trading community by the particular user, (3) ~~one or~~
              ~~more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with each user
              referred to the online trading community by each referred user of the particular
              user, and (4) a number of users referred to the online community by the particular
              user.

49.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48, further comprising:

       a second storage medium; and

       a second computer coupled with the second storage medium and the first computer via a

              network interface, the second computer to receive feedback concerning the

              particular user from other users of the plurality of users,

       generate a feedback value corresponding to the particular user based on the feedback, and

       transmit the feedback value to the first computer.

50.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49, wherein the first computer comprises a

       server computer and the second computer comprises a client computer.

51.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48, wherein the first computer is further to

       associate the community rating to the particular user; and

       maintain a relationship tree between the particular user, each user referred to the online

              trading community by the particular user, and each user referred to the online

              trading community by each referred user of the particular user.

52.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48, wherein the first computer is further to

       perform a recursive routine when determining the community rating for the particular

       user.

53.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48, wherein the one or more characteristic

       values and the community rating comprise one or more of the following: alphabetic

       values, numeric values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values.

54.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49, wherein the second computer is accessed

       by the plurality of users to trade merchandise, wherein the trading of the merchandise

       comprises buying or selling of goods or services.

55.   (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data

representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine

to:

associate one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an

online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an

individual <u>feedback</u> rating associated with each user; and

determine a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by utilizing

one or more of the following: (1) ~~one or more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual</u>

<u>feedback rating</u> associated with the particular user, (2) ~~one or more characteristic~~

~~values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with each user of the plurality of

users referred to the online trading community by the particular user, (3) ~~one or~~

~~more characteristic values~~ <u>an individual feedback rating</u> associated with each user

referred to the online trading community by each referred user of the particular

user, and (4) a number of users referred to the online community by the particular

user.

56.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 55, wherein the sets of

       instruction which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to associate

       the community rating to the particular user.

57.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 55, wherein the online

       trading community comprises an electronic community to trade merchandise over a

       network, wherein the trading of the merchandise comprises at least one of buying or

       selling of goods or services.

58.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 55, wherein the sets of

       instruction which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to maintain

       a relationship tree between the particular user, each user referred to the online trading

       community by the particular user, and each user referred to the online trading community

       by each referred user of the particular user.

59.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 55, wherein the sets of

       instruction which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to perform a

       recursive routing when determining of the community rating for the particular user.